

Each year in North Carolina, lives are endangered, money and time are wasted and property is destroyed because individuals fail to follow safe digging practices.

The "One-Call" system, which is free to the excavator as well as the homeowner, helps those who dig comply with the safety rules and regulations of the construction industry.

In a typical neighborhood, a complex web of utility lines are buried under lawns, sidewalks and driveways. When digging, one wrong move might cause the community of residents to be cut off from heat, electricity, telephones, water, 911 calls, and other vital services. When you make the free call to the One-Call Center, they notify their member utilities to mark the ground with color-coded paint. After the utilities are marked in your work area, you have taken the first step to avoid damage or injury.

Calling before you dig and digging safely not only prevents damage, but is also the law! North Carolina state law requires homeowners, contractors and excavators to contact the One-Call Center at least two business days before digging. "Taking care where you dig with a shovel or backhoe can not only prevent damage to underground utilities, but the potential loss of life as well," says Ivan Thomas of City of Asheville's Water Department. Thomas is the chair of the Buncombe County Utility Coordinating Committee.

The "Dig Safely" campaign is the centerpiece of the North Carolina Utility Notification Center's efforts to increase public awareness of North Carolina excavation laws and safe digging practices.

The North Carolina One Call Center provides a toll-free telephone number, 811, to help reduce damages to underground facilities, thereby reducing the loss of service to the public and the loss of time and money to excavators, utilities and taxpayers. So, be safe, not sorry, Know what's below, Call before you dig, Dial 811.

